

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for downloading a file from a computer, the system comprising:

5 means for retrieving a plurality of portions of a file from a plurality of computers, wherein at least a first of said portions is retrieved from a first one of said computers and at least a second of said portions is retrieved from a second one of said computers; and

10 means for assembling said file from said plurality of portions.

2. A system according to claim 1 and further comprising:

means for determining the presence of said file on each of said computers.

3. A system according to claim 2 wherein said means for determining is operative to:

determine the presence of said file on a primary computer; and

20 determine whether said file on each of said plurality of computers is a duplicate of said file on said primary computer.

4. A system according to claim 2 wherein said means for determining is operative to determine that said files on each of said computers have at

least one file characteristic in common.

5. A system according to claim 1 and further comprising:

means for receiving a list of the addresses of said computers  
5 from a query-capable computer.

6. A system according to claim 1 and further comprising:

means for determining the performance of said  
computers;

10 means for ranking said computers from best  
performing to worst performing,

and wherein said means for retrieving is operative to  
retrieve from a selected plurality of said computers selected in order of their  
ranking from best performing to worst performing.

15 7. A system according to claim 6 wherein said means for determining is  
operative to determine the response time of said computers.

8. A system according to claim 6 wherein said means for determining is  
20 operative to determine the throughput of said computers.

9. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is  
operative to:

discontinue retrieving any of said portions from any of said

computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls below a predefined performance level; and

continue retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from any other of said computers.

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10. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is operative to:

discontinue retrieving any of said portions from any of said computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls below a predefined performance level; and

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continue retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from a computer other than any of said computers.

11. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is operative to retrieve using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

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12. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is operative to retrieve using Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).

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13. A method for downloading a file from a computer, the method comprising:

retrieving a plurality of portions of said file from a plurality of computers, wherein at least a first of said portions is retrieved from a first of any of said computers and at least a second of said portions

is retrieved from a second of any of said computers; and

assembling said file from said plurality of portions.

14. A method according to claim 13 and further comprising:

5                   determining the presence of said file on each of said  
plurality of said computers.

15. A method according to claim 14 wherein determining the presence of  
said file comprises:

10                   determining the presence of said file on a primary  
computer, and

                  determining whether said file on each of said plurality of  
computers is a duplicate of said file on said primary computer.

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performing,

and wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises retrieving from a selected plurality of said computers selected in order of their ranking from best performing to worst performing.

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19. A method according to claim 18 wherein determining the performance of said computers comprises determining the response time of said computers.

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20. A method according to claim 18 wherein determining the performance of said computers comprises determining the throughput of said computers.

21. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises:

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discontinuing retrieving any of said portions from any of said computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls below a predefined performance level; and

continuing retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from any other of said computers.

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22. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises:

discontinuing retrieving any of said portions from any of said computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls

below a predefined performance level; and

continuing retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion  
from a computer other than any of said computers.

5 23. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of  
portions comprises retrieving using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

24. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of  
portions comprises retrieving using Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).

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25. A computer program embodied on a computer-readable medium for  
downloading a file from a computer and comprising:

a file retrieval code segment operative to retrieve a plurality  
of portions of said file from a plurality of computers, wherein said file  
15 retrieval code segment is operative to retrieve at least a first of said  
portions from a first of any of said computers and at least a second of said  
portions from a second of any of said computers; and

a file assembly code segment operative to assemble said  
file from said plurality of portions.

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